

# Public Health Announces Funding Available for Distressed Cemeteries

**DOVER** – Cemeteries hold the remains of treasured members of our families, and may hold historical significance as well. Many small and older cemeteries lack sufficient funds for long-term care and maintenance because owners never established a perpetual care fund, or the prices they charged have not kept up with actual costs. Efforts to restore those that fall into disrepair can become costly. That's why the Distressed Cemetery Fund was established in 2009. The Fund exists to provide for the preservation of cemeteries by supporting repair and improvement projects that are outside normal maintenance activities.

The Delaware Cemetery Board's purpose is to register Delaware cemeteries, administer the Distressed Cemetery Fund, and refer complaints from the public to the appropriate agency. All theft or vandalism should immediately be reported to the local police. The Board refers complaints to the police, Delaware Attorney General's Consumer Protection Agency, or the Better Business Bureau.

To date the Delaware Cemetery Board has awarded \$120,169 in funding to 13 cemeteries (four of the thirteen cemeteries received funding twice making a total of 17 awards). The maximum amount available from the Fund to each cemetery is \$10,000 every two years but a financial assistance request must be matched with real dollars and/or documented volunteer hours. Awards have been used to repair tombstones/monuments, repair or replace fences/stonewalls/gates, landscaping, remove trees and brush, purchase or repair lawn equipment, purchase sheds, topsoil and seeding, conducting of perimeter surveys and plot plans.

The Distressed Cemetery Fund is funded by adding \$2.00 to the fee established for each copy of a certificate of death. Individuals and organizations may also make contributions or bequests to the Fund.

The next Delaware Cemetery Board meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m., Dec. 9, 2015 in the Dover Library, Meeting Room B (1st floor). The Board will set its 2016 meeting dates and an Executive Session will be held to discuss two applications for Distressed Cemetery Fund monies.

The five members of the Delaware Cemetery Board are appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services, with administrative support provided by the Division of Public Health. In addition to administering the Fund, the Cemetery Board is authorized to: Promulgate rules and regulations for the registration of cemeteries; Designate a cemetery as "distressed" based on standards set forth in the rules and regulations; Authorize payment to a distressed cemetery from the Fund; Require a thorough accounting of each recipient's use of money from the Fund; Receive and forward to appropriate agencies of the State, or other organizations, complaints from any person relating to a Delaware cemetery; and Address specific cemetery issues as requested by the Governor or the General Assembly.

Registration is required for all cemeteries in Delaware every five years. To learn about registering a cemetery, or for more information on the Distressed Cemetery Fund visit the [Delaware Cemetery Board website](#).

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time*

*each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*